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July 19, 2019

FCC Mailroom

The Honorable Ajit V. Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St. SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

I write to express my deepest concern about the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) proposed rule (MB Docket No. 05-311) that would permit cable providers to reduce their franchise fee payments to local franchising authorities (LFAs). By allowing cable companies to include the fair market value of so-called "in-kind" benefits in calculating their franchise fee obligations, the FCC is severely disrupting a revenue model that makes possible vital communications and information resources for millions across the country. Some commenters on the proposed rule estimate a revenue decline to LFAs of as much as 70 percent; the impact of such a revenue loss would force LFAs to eliminate or curtail support of public access channels and/or raise taxes to compensate for the shortfall.

Montgomery College Television (MCTV) operates as a PEG channel in Montgomery County, Maryland. This year, MCTV will produce hundreds of programs created expressly for serving first-generation college students, military service members and veterans, non-English speakers, single parents, and those who are food insecure and from low-income families. MCTV produces programs that inspire workforce training and education for dozens of careers, including many high-tech jobs that help drive our economy. Each program addresses our community's priorities by engaging people with the College in a way that helps them succeed and prosper.


While creating this vital programming, the College educates and trains future telecommunications professionals who go on to work at cable and broadcast networks, local stations, and professional sports teams in their broadcast operations. This practical, hands-on educational experience helps ensure these students can succeed in their careers, and would not be possible without the funding afforded by cable franchise fees.

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My heart is troubled to think that our nation would diminish our commitment to public access communications that inform and foster success for those who need it most. At the August Open Commission Meeting, I ask that you seriously consider the devastating impact the FCC's proposed rule will undoubtedly have on financial support for public access channels. I urge that you preserve Congress' intent in the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984 and ensure that franchise fees remain a consistent and reliable resource that serves millions of Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "DeRionne P. Pollard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "DeRionne" being more prominent and the last name "Pollard" following in a similar style.

DeRionne P. Pollard, PhD
President

cc: US Senator Ben Cardin
US Senator Ed Markey
US Senator Chris Van Hollen Jr.
US Representative Jamie Raskin
US Representative John Sarbanes
US Representative David Trone